AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following claims are pending and allowed:

1. (Previously Presented): A telecommunications network device, comprising: a plurality of distributed processors; a data path coupled to the plurality of distributed processors; and a switched control path independent from said data path coupled to the plurality of distributed processors, wherein separate control path resources are dedicated to each of the plurality of distributed processors, and wherein the separate control path resources prioritize internal and external control information such that the external control information is given a higher priority.

2. (Original): The telecommunications network device of claim 1, wherein the switched control path is a first switched control path and further comprising: a second switched control path coupled to the plurality of distributed processors.

3. (Original): The telecommunications network device of claim 2, wherein the first and second switched control paths comprise redundant switched control paths.

4. (Previously Presented): The telecommunications network device of claim 1, wherein the switched control path comprises an Ethernet switch coupled to each of said plurality of distributed processors.

5. (Original): The telecommunications network device of claim 4, wherein the Ethernet switch comprises: an Ethernet switch subsystem; and a plurality of physical Ethernet port chips coupled to the Ethernet switch subsystem, wherein each of the plurality of distributed processors is coupled with at least one of the plurality of physical Ethernet port chips.

6. (Original): The telecommunications network device of claim 5, wherein the plurality of physical Ethernet port chips is a first plurality of physical Ethernet port chips and the Ethernet switch subsystem comprises: an Ethernet switch chip; and a second plurality of physical Ethernet port chips coupled with the Ethernet switch chip, wherein the second plurality of Ethernet port chips are further coupled with the first plurality of physical Ethernet port chips.

7. (Original): The telecommunications network device of claim 1, wherein the switched control path comprises a proprietary bus.

8. (Original): The telecommunications network device of claim 1, wherein the switched control path comprises an Asynchronous Transfer Mode network.

9. (Original): The telecommunications network device of claim 1, wherein the switched control path comprises a Multi-Protocol Label Switching network.

10. (Original): The telecommunications network device of claim 1, further comprising: a plurality of cards, wherein at least one of the plurality of processors is mounted on each of the plurality of cards.

11. (Original): The telecommunications network device of claim 1, wherein at least a portion of the plurality of distributed processors are coupled to the switched control path through multiple independent ports.

12. (Original): The telecommunications network device of claim 1, further comprising: an external port coupled with the switched control plane.

13. (Previously Presented): A telecommunications network device, comprising: a plurality of distributed processors; a data path coupled to the plurality of distributed

processors; and a switched control path independent from said data path, including a plurality of control links, wherein at least one of the plurality of control links is coupled with each of the plurality of distributed processors, wherein separate control path resources are dedicated to each of the plurality of distributed processors, and wherein the separate control path resources prioritize internal and external control information such that the external control information is given a higher priority.

14. (Original): The telecommunications network device of claim 13, wherein the control links comprise: Ethernet ports.

15. (Canceled)

16. (Previously Presented): The telecommunications network device of claim 13, wherein the separate control path resources comprise: an Ethernet port.

17. (Previously Presented): A telecommunications network, comprising: a plurality of network devices, wherein at least a portion of the plurality of network devices each comprise: a plurality of distributed processors; a data path coupled to the plurality of distributed processors; and a switched control path independent from said data path coupled to the plurality of distributed processors, wherein separate control path resources are dedicated to each of the plurality of distributed processors, and wherein the separate control path resources prioritize internal and external control information such that the external control information is given a higher priority.

18. (Original): The telecommunications network of claim 17, wherein the switched control path within each of the portion of the plurality of network devices is connected together as a multi-chassis switched control path.

19. (Previously Presented): A telecommunications network, comprising: a plurality of network devices, wherein at least a portion of the plurality of network devices each comprise: a plurality of distributed processors; a data path coupled to the plurality of distributed processors; and a switched control path independent from said data path, including a plurality of control links coupled to the plurality of distributed processors, wherein at least one of the plurality of control links is coupled with each of the plurality of distributed processors, wherein separate control path resources are dedicated to each of the plurality of distributed processors, and wherein the separate control path resources prioritize internal and external control information such that the external control information is given a higher priority.

20. (Original): The telecommunications network of claim 19, wherein the control path within each of the portion of the plurality of network devices is connected together as a multi-chassis control path.

21. (Canceled)

22. (Original): The telecommunications network of claim 21, wherein the control path within each of the portion of the plurality of network devices is connected together as a multi-chassis control path.

23. (Previously Presented): A method of managing a telecommunications network device including a plurality of distributed processors, comprising: transmitting network data through a data path within the network device; and transmitting internal and external control information between the plurality of distributed processors through a switched control path independent from said data path coupled to the plurality of distributed processors, wherein separate control path resources are dedicated to each of the plurality of distributed processors, and wherein the separate control path resources prioritize

internal and external control information such that the external control information is given a higher priority.

24. (Original): The method of claim 23, wherein the switched control path is an Ethernet switch.

25. (Original): The method of claim 23, wherein the switched control path is an Asynchronous Transfer Mode network.

26. (Original): The method of claim 23, wherein the switched control path is a Multi-Protocol Label Switching (MPLS) network.

27. (Original): The method of claim 23, wherein the switched control path is a proprietary bus.

28. (Previously Presented): A method of managing a telecommunications network device including a plurality of distributed processors, comprising: transmitting network data through a data path within the network device; and transmitting internal and external control information between the plurality of distributed processors through a plurality of control links coupled to the plurality of distributed processors in a switched control path independent from said data path, wherein at least one of the plurality of control links is dedicated to each of the plurality of distributed processors, wherein separate control path resources are dedicated to each of the plurality of distributed processors, and wherein the separate control path resources prioritize internal and external control information such that the external control information is given a higher priority.

29. (Canceled)

30. (Previously Presented): A method of managing a telecommunications network including a plurality of network devices, wherein at least a portion of the plurality of network devices each includes a plurality of distributed processors, a data path coupled to the plurality of distributed processors, and a switched control path independent from said data path coupling the plurality of distributed processors, comprising: connecting each of the switched control paths in the portion of the plurality of network devices; and transmitting internal and external control information between the plurality of network devices through the connected switched control paths, wherein separate control path resources are dedicated to each of the plurality of distributed processors, and wherein the separate control path resources prioritize internal and external control information such that the external control information is given a higher priority.

31. (Canceled)

32. (Original): The method of claim 30, wherein the switched control paths comprise Ethernet switches.

33. (Original): The method of claim 30, wherein each control path dedicates control path resources to each of the plurality of processors within the network device.

34. (Previously Presented): The method of claim 30, wherein each control path dedicates a control link to each of the plurality of processors within the network device.

35. (Previously Presented): A telecommunications network communications device, comprising:

a plurality of distributed processors;

a data path coupled to the plurality of distributed processors, and

a switched control path independent from said data path coupled to the plurality of distributed processors, said switched control path providing a dedicated bandwidth to each distributed processor for transmission of internal and external control information,

wherein at least one of said distributed processors is coupled to the switched control path through multiple independent ports,

wherein separate control path resources are dedicated to each of the plurality of distributed processors,

and wherein the separate control path resources prioritize internal and external control information such that the external control information is given a higher priority.